

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. – 11. (cancelled).

12. (currently amended) A catalytic apparatus for exhaust purification that is provided in an exhaust path of an internal-combustion engine operable with at least a theoretical air-fuel ratio and a lean air-fuel ratio, comprising:

exhaust purification means provided in the exhaust path and adapted to absorb NO_x when an air-fuel ratio of incoming exhaust gas is a lean air-fuel ratio and to release or reduce the absorbed NO_x when an oxygen concentration of the incoming exhaust gas lowers; and

a three-way catalyst provided in the exhaust path and located on an upper-stream side of said exhaust purification means, said three-way catalyst having

(i.) an inner layer thereof mainly containing an admixture of both rhodium and platinum as noble metals and

(ii.) a surface layer thereof mainly containing platinum as a noble metal,

said three-way catalyst being loaded with a very small quantity of or no ceria.

13. (previously presented) A catalytic apparatus for exhaust purification according to claim 12, wherein a platinum content of said surface layer is set within a range from 0.05 to 20.0 g/l of catalyst volume.

14. (previously presented) A catalytic apparatus for exhaust purification according to claim 12, wherein a platinum content of said surface layer is set within a range from 0.5 to 10.0 g/l of catalyst volume.

15. (previously presented) A catalytic apparatus for exhaust purification according to claim 12, wherein a ratio of a rhodium content to a platinum content in said inner layer is set within a range from 1:1 to 1:10.